

M. 99,249

S. 201,347

AUG 22 1965

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Beaten but Not Out, Percy Works to Alter Illini GOP

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By J. F. ter Horst

CHICAGO — Ask an Illinois Republican what he thinks about Charles H. Percy and he will reply, contemptuously or admiringly, "A real Boy Scout."

Since he lost the 1964 governorship race, the 45-year-old glamor boy of Illini politics has been carrying on as though he won. There are two reasons.

Paramount is that campaigning for public office has given Percy a relish for public service and a distinct apathy for personal money-making.

The blond, handsome board chairman of Bell & Howell already has made his mark and his fortune in business. He really seems to believe in the philosophy he expresses to those who ask why:

"There are two kinds of people — those who extract and those who contribute. I never knew an extractor to be genuinely happy."

The second reason for Percy's unorthodox behavior for a loser is best expressed by the kind of Horatio Algerism that marked his life from stock boy to company executive: "If at first you don't succeed, etc."

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PERCY definitely has set his sights on another statewide political campaign, either against Sen. Paul Douglas, the Democrat whose term runs out next year, or in a second

for the governorship in 1968.

The mechanism for Percy's bid is the New Illinois committee, a privately financed organization maintained by Percy, close political advisers and businessmen friends who are determined to remake the Illinois Republican party in a moderately liberal mold. Its rationale is best expressed by Percy's own admission: "I was wrong about Goldwater."

The Arizona senator last fall polled only 40 per cent of the Illini vote despite solid backing by the GOP congressional delegation, Sen. Everett M. Dirksen and the courthouse and statehouse crowd of oldline Republicans. In contrast, Percy ran at the top of the GOP ticket.

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THE NEW Illinois committee is Percy's bandwagon for bringing about a modernization of the state party, he wants to lead. There are volunteer subcommittees working on projects like civil rights, economic revival for the depressed communities, help for handicapped persons.

A special research team supplies Percy with studies on issues such as wire-tapping, open housing occupancy, new ideas in state aid to education and reapportionment of the state legislature.

It has a six-man paid staff headed by John Guyer, a 34-year-old brother-in-law of Percy and former

man. Public relations director is Scott Cohen, a pipe-smoking braintruster who formerly worked for the CIA.

Backed by this formidable group, Percy is beating the state's highways and back roads in a search for audiences and political support.

Unlike the experience of most defeated candidates, Percy is almost inundated with speaking requests. His committee received more than 2,250 since last November, and Percy makes all he can in a 20-hour day.

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A FEW WEEKS ago, the committee's civil rights panel concluded a five-week seminar on civil rights and the direction the party of Abe Lincoln and the Negro should be heading together.

Percy's aim, which he considers was successfully achieved, was to give understanding of the Negro revolution in American life to those Republicans who, as he puts it, "will give \$1,000 to FEPC but won't spend 50 cents for a paper-back to find out what the fuss is really all about."

Another new Illinois committee project was a trip to southern Illinois to de-

termine how depressed communities can be revived with a combination of government and private help. Two planeloads of Chicago businessmen went along with Percy.

A third is a committee venture, being handled through the Chicago boys clubs, to motivate school dropouts and culturally deprived youngsters into a realization of their need for schooling.

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THE OLD GUARD is watching Percy with disdain and suspicion, convinced that he is out to destroy their GOP in order to build a political machine for his own personal use.

As an example, the conservative Republicans controlling the state senate by a slim margin rejected Percy-backed bills for open occupancy. Instead they favored a bill that would prevent fair housing legislation in the state.

In the end, Percy may not convince the old time Republican politicians in Illinois that he is on the right track. But whenever he is discouraged, he reminds himself that his brand of Republicanism drew 335,000 more votes than Goldwater.